

# Mumps

## What is mumps?

Mumps is a highly contagious infection caused by the mumps virus.

## Who can get mumps?

People who have received two doses of mumps vaccine or people who have already had the illness are believed to be immune from mumps. However, about 10% of people who are vaccinated will not develop an immune response and may still get mumps. About 85% of people who are not immunized will get mumps by adulthood. Unvaccinated children between the ages of 5 and 14 are most commonly infected. Some people get such mild symptoms from mumps that the disease is never diagnosed.

## What are the symptoms of mumps?

The most common symptoms are fever, headache, muscle aches, cough, tiredness and loss of appetite followed by swelling of the cheeks or jaw from enlarged salivary glands. Some people may also experience hearing loss, and in some cases, males who have reached puberty may experience painful, swollen testicles. Some women may also experience painful, swollen breasts and ovaries.

## How soon do symptoms appear?

Symptoms can appear 12—25 days after infection, but usually show up within 18 days.

## How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread by respiratory droplets or mucus when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The virus can also be spread when saliva or mucus gets on objects such as toys, doorknobs and faucet handles that are then touched by another person who carries the virus to his nose, eyes or mouth.

## How long is an infected person contagious?

A person may spread mumps 3 days before symptoms appear until 9 days after they appear.

## What is the treatment for mumps?

There is no supportive treatment for mumps. Most cases are mild to moderate with complete recovery and no long-term health problems. Supportive care should be given as needed, and individuals who become very ill should call their health care provider. In rare cases, mumps can lead to hearing loss, encephalitis, meningitis, spontaneous abortion and sterility in males.

## How can I protect myself and my family?

The best protection against mumps is to be vaccinated. Children receive a first dose of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine at about 12 months of age. They receive the second dose between 4 and 6 years of age. Most adults who have not been vaccinated should also receive one dose of vaccine. Adults who work in health-care or school settings, and individuals at high risk of exposure to mumps should receive two doses. Pregnant women and individuals with impaired immune systems should not be vaccinated. In addition to vaccination, other protection measures include frequent hand washing, not sharing eating utensils and regularly cleaning surfaces such as faucets, toys and doorknobs.

## How effective is the vaccine?

One dose of vaccine is effective for about 80% of the people who receive it. Two doses are effective in about 90% of people who receive it. Two doses offer better protection than just one dose.

## Are there side effects from the vaccine?

Mild side effects may include a rash, fever or swelling in the neck or cheeks. Moderate side effects may include seizures, temporary joint pain and stiffness and a temporary low platelet count which can cause a bleeding disorder. Very rare serious side effects may include serious allergic reactions, deafness, permanent brain damage, long-term seizures, coma or lowered consciousness.